Tape NO. 10

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NARRATOR Wayne Miller

INTERVIEWER Phyllis Lotz

PLACE SYV Historical Museum

DATE Oct. 7, 1979

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Interview with A. Wayne Miller, Interview 1
Date of Interview: 7 October 1979; Santa Ynez California
Interviewer: Phyllis Lotz with Jeannette Lyons
Transcriber: Phyllis Lotz
Begin Tape 1, Side 1

PL: Thank you Mr. Miller for coming back to the Valley to talk of early days. Miss Lyons is here to ask questions also.

PL: Mr. Miller, when did your parents come to the Santa Ynez Valley?

Miller: I think they came in 1878 or 79. My Father came around the same time, he was Joe Miller, he and his twin brother came then. Him and my Mother were married in 1883, so they came pretty early.

PL: Why did they come to the Valley?

Miller: To farm, this was new land. They knew the Fields, and the Coiners and the Flannagans. They were the first ones to farm the valley, out east of town. They farmed pretty big. The Fields, farmed on the Zaca RAnch for years and years. He farmed over 2,000 acres and all with horses.

Lyons: Was that Ezra Fields?

Miller: Yes.

Lyons: Ez Fields married your mother's sister? She was a Jamison?

Miller: Yes.

Lyons: Were you born in Santa Ynez?

Miller: Yes, born out here on the College Ranch in 1886, you ought to know, the same your that your were born, Jeanette.

Lyons: Your mother had another sister?

Miller: Yes, she had four. Mrs. Fields was the oldest, then Mrs. Bickford, then Mrs. Dyer.

Lyons: Any brothers?

Miller: Mac, Had and Sam were my uncles.

Lyons: Had married Miss Sullivan one of the High School teachers. She lived to be 98.

Miller: Had and his two children were killed in a train accident.

Lyons: Your mother was married first to Joe Miller and when did she meet Bill Bray?

Miller: Bray went to work for us, my brother ran the ranch for many years on the College property. Then he went into the saloon business.

Lyons: Was Lorraine Miller related to you?

Miller: Yes, a cousin. Her mother and my mother married twin brothers. It was my Aunt Lorraine who was killed in an automoble accident with her husband and two children about 1920.

PL: How many brothers and sister did you have?

Miller: I had two brothers, Millers, then Lenora, Sam and Lucy, all Brays.

Lyons: Was the other Wayne Miller related to you?

Miller: Yes, my uncle, and John Miller was my cousin. He was killed in a car accident. John Married a school teacher, was killed at Four Corners.

Lyons: Do you remember Mrs. Greer?

Miller: Yes, she ran the hotel and dance hall. I remember her daughter, Della. Mrs. Greer's husband died in Nevada on the way to California but she came on with her daughter.

Lyons: John Todd married a Kane girl. It was a mixed up family. Jimmy Kane was, do you remember old John Lee? Mrs. Lee was Jimmy Kane's first wife. John Lee, it is said traded his wife for a saddle and horse. They lived in Happy Canyon.

Miller: I used to seat at the Greers and I don't remember any husbands.

Lyons: Do you remember the Strahan and Edsell Store?

Miller: Yes, it became the Murphy Brothers Store, and I remember Joe Ruff who had a store on the corner. The next store was John Millers, my cousin John. He He and Edsell had a store together, then he bought Jesse Edsell out. Then up this side was Simon Hartman who was a Jew, as was Joe Ruff. Dan Murphy went into the Ruff Store one day and asked Isadore a young boy then, for a left handed wrench. Isadore

told Murphy that he did't have one but he would order one for him. Another time Murphy asked the boy for side hill shoes!

Lyons: Mr. Brant had a store on the corner?

Miller: That was the original site for the Ruff Store, and then the post office, but he moved across the street I think the first store Brant had was in Greers restaurant. I remember when the restaurant burned down. I've known the Brants as long as I can remember. They lived near the river and had a brick kiln where they made bricks, for all the fireplaces around town. Mr. Brant made all the bricks for his house. We used to go down as there were lots of bricks afterwards. There was a certain kind of dirt they used and he had Chinaman working for him.

PL: I wanted to ask you about the Chinese in Santa Ynez?

Miller: They lived where the reservation is and had a vegetable garden there for years and years. A group of men, and right around the corner here (the museum) was a Chinese Laundry behind the hotel. The head Chinaman was named Gong. And the man who ran the laundry was Kum Ree. One time I went down to get my laundry and found I had only one sock. I didn't know what he was talking about, but he had lost one sock. They were here for years until the government came in and took the reservation for the Indians. They were run out. Sometimes the little Chinamen would come to the saloon and get pretty drunk.

PL: Tell us more about you?

Miller: When my parents went to farm the College Ranch they had to build a house in 1886 or so. The college was discontinued in 1883 and that was when my family came. My parents rented east on the Santa Aguda Creek. The whole thing belonged to the Catholic Church. The first person to own land there was Pete Hanly. He lived where the Hunts are now, in the old seminary buildings. Later he moved nearer to Solvang at Alamo Pintado, south end. When Hanley first came here from Oxnard, he lived on the San

Lucas Ranch, had sheep. We got aquainted with them.

Lyons: You spoke of the Flannagans being one of the first to come to the Valley?

Miller: Yes, but not the Pete Flannagans. These lived at the Coiner place. They went to San Francisco. The boy was a policeman for years and contracted TB and came to the Zaca Ranch to recouperate.

PL: Where did you go to school?

Miller: To Ballard. I walked every morning. I would meet Jeannette on her bike boing to highschool, as I was going to grammar school. I walked from Four Croners. Grace was my teacher(Grace Lyons Davison). There weren't many kids. Boys were Sam Lyons, Abner Hill, Billy Stewart, Albert Shanklin, Harold Derr, and girls, Mary ?, Grace Shanklin, the two Blair girls and me.

PL: Did your brother go to Ballard too?

Miller: No, he was on the coast. I lived at the old Summers place. There used to be a prune orchard there. A narrow house painted yellow. John Summers had one girl, Mabel. He clerked in the store for my uncle. I remember when they left we gave them a farewell party.

Lyons: Do you remember any shootings on the streets of Santa Ynez?

Miller: Jack Nosser of Nojoqui shot a man who had a big watch in his pocket, the bullet hit the watch instead of him. I don;t remember the mans name. They used to kill one anothere here once in ahile.

Lyons: Do you remember any stage robberies?

Miller: Oh yeh! I know when they were robbed. I remember a fellow who worked for my uncle, Frank Ratkins. He wanted to be a cowboy and got to be a good rider. Then he got the idea that he wanted to be a robber and he robbed the stage up there. We always figured it was him, he would come down to the ranch and hid there in the hills near where we lived. We never kept anything locked, we had a storeroom where he would take food. It was some years later that he came back to the Valley. He had gone to the coast

and he told about robbing the stages. He then went up to the Mother Lode country and robbed stages there. I think they finally caought him. There was a picture of him, and although he had grown a moustache we recognized him. Yes, it was pretty wild here. Old Harm ? held up the stage on a bet out here by the San Lucus and beat it into town and gave them back their money. That was just a bet.

PL: Did you finish the 8th grade at Ballard?

Miller: No, I quit school because I knew enough. Then I went to work on a cattle ranch in the Valley. I spent alot of time on the San Marcos, started to work there in 1917. Off and on until 1924.

PL: Who was owner of the San Marcos?

Miller: George Meade, he owned the Alisal too. He had a red beard. I did not like to stay in one place.

PL: When did you get married.

Miller: I got married in 1925 or 6. My wife was a Duggan, first name Irene. I met her, a friend of mine was going with a girl in Los Alamos, one of the Foxen girls, so he invited me to to to a barbecue and I met my wife there. She is quite a bit younger than me, 20 years. We lived in Vertura and I worked in the oil fields. I worked there ten years. I quit the San Marcos because I kept getting hurt. I was badly hurt by the sattle horn and went to old Doc Smith. He examined me and told me I had pneumonia so to go home to my mother's and have her make me a pneumonia jacket and to put me in bed. I came as far as Santa Ynez, and do you remember ol Lu Brewer, he mixed up a few drinks and then I back to the San Marcos. I saddled up a horse and went back to the line camp in the mountains. The doctor came to mu mothers house to have another look at me, and I was not there. The doctor scared her when he told her that I would die, so she called the ranch and was told I was at the vaquero camp, so could not get in touch with me. It was there that I began to hemorrhage. I had to quit. Then I went to work

for the light and power company. I was there for a month when I was knocked off a 55 foot pole, broke by ankles and smashed my feet. I didn't do much riding for a long while.

Lyons: Was George Row forman of the San Marcos Ranch then?

Miller: yes, when I first went to work there, I think they had the San Marcos Cattle Co. Then it was bought out by Patterson at Pt. Hueneme. They had a small railroad to Ventura to Bakersfield so the Southern Pacific would not take their cattle cars, it made Patterson mad so they would drive the cattle. We went to the Carrizo Plains and brought 400 head.

It took five or six weeks to get back to the San Marcos. They wanted to take their time with the cattle.

Lyons: Was Adrulfo Lopez working at the ranch then?

Miller: Yes, a time or two. I worked with him at the Alisal too. His brother, Ben and I went into the Army at the same time. 1917. I had my right leg broken in five places about a year before I went into the service. They nearly turned me down on account of it. I wanted to go overseas. We were living in tents on Angel Island(San Francisco Bay)and many came down with pneumonia. I was there for 31 days and then to a camp near Stanford University. I was in the infantry and then with machine guns. I was signed up as a packer but I never did any work. We got as far as Camp Mills, Long Island, for overseas. We were loaded and went out for two days and two nights and then the boat turned around as it was November 11, 1918. I then went to Camp Lee, Virginia and was there for three months.

I was married in 1925 and have three children, two boys and one girl. Sam, Albert and Posalie. Nine grandchildren. Albert has worked for the police department for 30 years. Sam is inspector for an engineers outfit. Son-in-law is an insurance agent.

PL: Did you live all those years in Ventyra?

Miller: We came back to Santa Ynez for three years and back to Ventura. Stayed there until World War II help was scarce so as my brother in las was in Sacramento where they had hired alot of nationals and no one could spek Spanish to these workers, he told the foreman that I could speak Spanish. They wrote me a letter and then called on the phone that they would give me tien dollars a day. Sent a truck down to get our luggage and family. After I got there they took me to Spanish Town on the company grounds and had me speak to the workers. The workers were going to leave but the company owed them for another half days work. I asked the Spanish man and he said they wanted their money. After much conversation the Mexican were paid their half days work and I was able to help. This was in Yuba City. Later more Mexican came and I worked there. Years ago when I was to school in the Santa Maria Valley, there were 63 students and only three were Anglos so I picked up the language.

PL: What school was that?

Miller: Olive School. Before I went to Ballard. My aunt Mrs. McMurry lived up in the Tepusquet and my Uncle Wayne.

PL: Did you go to Zaca Lake in the early days?

Miller: I used to go up there pretty regularily. There wan't much of a road and you could not use a car. When we first went up there were no cars anyway. John Libeu took up goverment land there. He got married and raised a family up there of five girls. There was Annie, Rosa, Louise, Eulalie. It was so pretty, 35 acres on the lake and pine pine trees. We stayed over night . No fishing because there were no trout. But they put bass in. When I worked on the Zaca Ranch I would go to the lake and stay over Saturday night. I would get a bamboo pole put a red rag on the end and catch bull forgs. There were millions of them! A person talking to another person could be heard on the opposite side of the lake just so plain.

Just like we are talking right now. The first time I was up there, there was only one cabin. Libeu may have put it up when he was a forest ranger.

Lyons: When you had dances in Santa Ynez who played the music?

Miller: Mort Lewis, he played the violin, and somtimes Lorraine Miller played the piano. Mort would go to sleep playing the fiddle and they would have to stop him as he slept.

Lyons: When I was going to high school there was a man who played music by rubbing sticks, Old man Cole. When Edna Craig played the piano she chewed gum, and never missed a beat as she played and chewed.

Miller: Old Man Lee, when he had the barber shop, he would cut a strand of hair as he chewed tabacco, cut and chew. We would go and watch him.

Lyons: One of John Kane's boys was drowned at Gaviota?

Miller: Danny. Jimmy Kane committed suicide. He had a livery stable in Orcutt, he and his wife had some trouble, so he shot himself. Charles married Mary Smith, she had been married to Will Fields but they separated and she married Charlie Kane. I don't know what became of John Kane.

Lyons: Which one of the Kanes married John Todd?

Miller: Mabel. There was just one girl in the Kane family. She was a nice girl and Danny was a fine boy. I don't know when the Barnes came to the Valley. There was quite a bunch of them.

Lyons: There were five boys, and settled all in Ballard. One was a blacksmith, Pete, then Frank, and Tom who never married, Bill, and Jim. Jim moved to Los Olivos. Walter and Charles were his children. Frank had Lottie, Sally, Landon, and Delbert.

Enter Myrtle Buell:

Miller: How are you, good to see you.

Buell: Still in Ventura?

Miller: Yes, thirty years there

PL: Mr. Miller says John Miller was your father's first partner in the store in Santa Ynez?

Buell: Yes he was. My Dad first started out with Miller

PL: Mrs. Buell, did you go to Ballard School?

Buell: No, only to the old Santa Ynez school that burned down.

Miller: I think when Hunts first went down to the Collete Ranch, they lived in the old chapel of the college didn't they?

Buell: The older part. They tore poart of the buildings down for the lumber. I remember that building. Mrs. Hanly cooked at the college. Pete was Don Hanly's father. We used to go down there and stay with them and then years later we, Harold and I bought the property in 1922. The lumber in the buildings was redwood and first quality.

Miller: Charlie Gardner rented that place and I worked for him. Then Old Peg Leg Smith came down and rebuilt the old chapel for the Hunts. The Hanly's moved to the south end of Alamo Pintado Rd.

PL: You have seen alot of changes in our Valley?

Miller: Oh yes, there was very little here, they had three saloons

Lyons: There were 11 or so places you could buy liquor. Browns, Ivy, College Hotel, Daniels, Pericas.

Lyons: Who lived on the College Ranch before you?

Miller: Ballognia, then Hanlys then Hunts.

Buell: That man used to make cheese in the bathtub and cure it in a manure pile.

Lyons: Nat Giorgi made fine cheese.

Buell: The Cadodas also made good cheese.

PL: Mr. Miller, when did you retire?

Miller: Oh, about 3 or 4 years ago.

PL: What happened to your cousin John Miller?

Miller: He stayed here in Santa Ynez. He was born in the Valley

Lyons: What did the other Wayne Miller do?

Miller: He farmed, and was Johnnie's father. John's children are gone

PL: Thankyou all for visiting today.